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# Impact of Schema on Students' Writing

By  
Hali-Ana Harvey

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS  
May 2021

Approved By

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor:

Dr. Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reader:

Dr. Ellen Shelton

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reader:

Dr. Sally Quong

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## DEDICATION:

This thesis is dedicated to all of the people who have had some part in shaping me into the person that I am today.

To my mom and dad who have encouraged me since the very beginning, taught me some of the most valuable information, supported me through my failures, and celebrated me during my successes. I would not be the woman that I am today without their constant love and support, and I definitely would not be writing this thesis without their encouragement to do so.

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And lastly, to my friends Meghan and Olivia who encourage me daily and love me unconditionally. Without their constant love and laughter, life would be pretty boring.

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ABSTRACT  
HALI-ANA HARVEY: Impact of Schema on Students' Writing  
(Under the direction on Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham)

All too often, students perform poorly on their writing assignments, and it seems that teachers have difficulty understanding where the problem comes from. This study seeks to prove that the issue begins with the students' lack of background knowledge that students possess about the topics they are being asked to write about. To begin, the author emphasizes the importance of background knowledge in students. The study also describes ways in which teachers can check for background knowledge before assigning writing, and explores how teachers can build background knowledge in students. To improve students' overall writing, teachers need to first recognize where the issue lies, and then find ways to implement the background building strategies into their classroom teaching.

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## **Introduction:**

Schema, or a student's previous knowledge of a certain subject, plays a significant role in their learning. What a student already knows about a subject is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to that subject (Marzano, 1). Through multiple semesters of student/teacher observation, the fact that the lack of schema was a major issue in the classroom became apparent. This paper will observe how well schema affects a student's ability to write and write well, as well as ways for teachers to build background knowledge effectively.

To understand how to teach students the background knowledge necessary to excel at whatever they are doing, teachers must first understand the importance of background knowledge. Dr. Nina Katajavuori, Dr. Sari Lindblom, and Telle Hailikari discuss this concept in their article "The Relevance of Prior Knowledge in Learning and Instructional Design" by saying:

Prior knowledge has long been considered the most important factor influencing learning and student achievement. The amount and quality of background knowledge positively influence both knowledge and acquisition and the capacity to apply higher order cognitive problem-solving skills (Hailikari, et al., 1).

Background knowledge is crucial to a student's success in education. While it is true that "students' personal attributes and aptitudes, their social interactions with peers, teachers, and their families, and larger familial and societal structures all impact student learning to varying degrees," the amount of schema that they have on a particular topic greatly impacts their ability to acquire knowledge (ULEAD Education, 1). It is almost impossible to successfully learn about interrelated topics without knowing at least something about one of them (Study International).



However, students do not always come into the classroom with the background knowledge that one might expect them to have.

Most teachers come from at least a middle class background, and they sometimes make assumptions about what students should already know. However, in our country, “we are currently realizing a deepening of poverty for American children, both in terms of the number of children in poverty and in the intensity of the poverty they are experiencing” (Jarjoura, et. al, 159). Due to this rise of students living in poverty, obtaining background knowledge on their own may not be possible for some students. This makes it the responsibility of teachers to build background knowledge for their students. It is vital to a student’s achievement to acquire background knowledge to write about a specific topic, and various techniques can accomplish this task.

To build and activate schema in students, teachers must first determine what core background knowledge the students will need (Fisher et al., 23). While all background knowledge is relevant, not all background knowledge is equally important depending on the topic at hand, so teachers must decide what particular knowledge they want all of their students to have. There are several ways to go about building this knowledge for students, but “Edgar Dale theorized that learners retain more information by what they “do” as opposed to what is “heard,” “read,” or “observed” (Anderson, 1). Based on this fact, teachers could effectively build background knowledge in students by using something as simple as a direct experience, where students are more likely to retain 90% of the information, or something as complex as reading, where students would be more likely to only retain 10% of the information (Dale).

The idea of building background knowledge is a constant in the classroom. Throughout the year, giving students the schema needed to fulfill the assignment is the responsibility of the teacher. Essentially, teachers should not ask students to write about something on which they have little to no knowledge. Elise Wise, who holds a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, emphasizes this point by saying "a student could have the highest IQ in the room, but if he hasn't been exposed to basic information that relates to the lesson, he will have difficulty learning" (Wile). Classroom teachers carry the expectation that students- especially the smartest students- are going to know what is necessary about the topic at hand; however, that is not always the case. With the disconnect between what is being taught and what students are already expected to know, even the smartest students will struggle.

## Literature Review

### *The Importance of Background Knowledge for Students*

There is a common saying from Sir Francis Bacon: “ipsa scientia potestas est,” or “knowledge is power.” Richard Hofstetter, Thomas G. Sticht, and Carolyn Hofstetter proved this phrase to be true by performing a study in which they tested the hypothesis that general knowledge and political knowledge are associated with power as defined by social values. They concluded their experiment by stating that:

“Knowledge was a consistent predictor of social and political power. Regardless of one’s cultural or subcultural background, possession of large banks of declarative knowledge about the dominant culture and about politics is associated with the possession and use of power in America.” (Hofstetter, et. al, 60).

Through their extensive research, Hofstetter, Sticht, and Hofstetter were able to prove that knowledge is, in fact, power. Simply by knowing bits of general information or political information, one is deemed “more powerful.” The outcome that was provided by this research forces one to understand the incredible impact that academic background knowledge has on one's life outside of academia and into their occupation. However, what failed to be considered in this process was the key word, *academic*. Robert J. Marzano explores this concept in his book,

*Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement*.

“Two students might have an equal amount of background knowledge. However, one student’s knowledge might relate to traditional school subjects such as mathematics, science, history and the like. The other student’s knowledge might be about nonacademic topics such as the best subway route to take to get downtown during rush hour, the place to stand in the subway car that provides the most ventilation on a hot summer day, and so on. The importance of one type of background knowledge over another is strictly a function of context (Marzano, 3).

This is useful when determining the difference between academic background knowledge and nonacademic background knowledge. One student has knowledge of subjects that are important to their success in school, while the other student's knowledge is only helpful in navigating public transportation. This is not to say that academic background knowledge is any more important than nonacademic background knowledge, as there are several reasons that a student might need non academic knowledge to be successful in an academic setting. For instance, if a teacher asked both the student with academic background knowledge and the student with the background knowledge about subways to write a narrative about using public transportation, the student with the large amount of knowledge on subways would be more successful in their writing. It is also true, however, "that children are expected to attend school, and success in school has a strong bearing on their earning potential" (Marzano, 3). Thus, giving way to the idea that knowledge is power, and power is money. If students do not have the knowledge required to perform well in school, the chance that they will not have successful careers after high school increases.

Background knowledge is crucial, not only in the educational career of a student, but also to their success in life after graduation. The background knowledge that a student already possesses is crucial to their ability to learn new information, as well as their ability to practice higher level thinking skills. Since background knowledge is critical to success in school and success in school is crucial to success after graduation, background knowledge is also critical to a person's role in society. The more knowledge that one has, the better off they will be. Afterall, as Sir Francis Bacon said, knowledge is power.

### ***Assessing Background Knowledge:***

Oftentimes, teachers want students to have some type of prior knowledge in what they are learning about; unfortunately, oftentimes, this is not the case. When this happens, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to build background knowledge in his/her students. There are several ways to do this, and each way is just as effective as any other. Before building background knowledge, however, a teacher should first decide what prior knowledge their students already have. This way, the teacher will know just how much background knowledge they need to build.

“By starting with what students already know, teachers can be more precise in their teaching. They do not have to make guesses about areas of confusion or gaps in understanding. In addition, quick assessments of background knowledge alert learners to their misunderstandings and may make the content a little more relevant. Attending to background knowledge is like getting inside students’ minds, which is a great place for middle level teachers to be” (Fisher, et. al, 22).

Teachers are able to gauge the knowledge that students have pertaining to the subject at hand by using pre-assessments. Thomas Berry of DePaul University emphasizes this point by saying “pre-tests are a non-graded assessment tool used to determine pre-existing subject knowledge. Typically pre-tests are administered prior to a course to determine knowledge baseline..” (Berry, 2008) There are multiple ways to pre-assess students, but each way has the same goal: “to determine what students know about a topic before it is taught” (Tomlinson).

Perhaps the most simplistic way to pretest students is through an informational survey or questionnaire. To assess background knowledge in this way, a teacher would just write a series of multiple choice questions that pertain to the subject that students are going to be learning about during that time. The *Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning* explains that “this kind of

assessment is typically low-stakes with no formal grade, and can be framed to the students as such (for instance, where appropriate, students can be told that they are not expected to know much of the information.)” (Yale). By ensuring students that they are not expected to know much of the material that they are being tested on, teachers can alleviate some of the nervousness that would come with the mention of a “test.”

Another way to gain an idea of what a student already knows about a subject is through a “skills conference.” Though a bit more time-consuming than most pre-assessments, this way gives teachers the most accurate data. “Conferencing involves meeting with students individually and asking them questions that are targeted towards the upcoming unit of study.” (Reigier, 9). During student work time, a teacher would individually ask each student a question related to the skills that the students will need for the upcoming unit. The teacher would then use the information they found during their pre-assessment to tailor their instructions in the lesson or unit (Phillips).

A teacher can also assess a student’s prior knowledge through writing. A quick, efficient way for teachers to do this is through a process known as “The Minute Paper.” According to the *Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching*, “The Minute Paper is a very commonly used classroom assessment technique” (Poese). When administering a “minute paper” assignment to a class, a teacher would write a maximum of 3 questions that pertain to the topic that will be being discussed. Students are given one minute to answer the questions, and their answers act as a baseline for what the teacher needs to address during the lesson. The Minute Paper, when used as a pre-assessment tool, “provides [teachers] with early feedback about what

prior knowledge or misconceptions students have about the topic, so [teachers] can attempt to build on their knowledge or dismantle their misconceptions” (Poese).

Determining background knowledge does not always have to be a series of questions or a writing activity, though. There are multiple ways that teachers can assess students’ prior knowledge without students even being aware that they are being assessed. The “Super Sleuth Activity” is a fun way to get students up and moving, as well as collaborating with one another. In this activity, “students are given a sheet of paper with a grid of questions” that relate to the new unit of study. For this activity,

“students rotate around the room and find people to answer their questions. Let students who are answering the questions choose the question they would like to answer. Once a student responds to one of the questions, that student puts their initials in the corresponding square. A student can only answer and initial one square per activity grid” (Reigier, 15-16).

When the time limit is over, students will join back and discuss their answers with the whole group. The student responses will allow teachers to gain an idea of the knowledge that the students have about the topic (Reigier, 15-16).

Another possibility in making assessing background knowledge a more engaging experience for students is through a pre-assessment game. While there are a plethora of games that could be used to assess prior knowledge, perhaps one of the most subject-area diverse games is a simple matching game. Natalie Reigier of *Regier Educational Resources* claims that “matching games can be used at any grade level and across subject areas” (Reigier, 12). In an English Language Arts classroom, matching games work particularly well when pre-assessing vocabulary. According to Reigier, to pretest students with this game, a teacher would give each student a set of cards with a vocabulary word or definition written on each card. The students

would then spend time matching the vocabulary words to the definitions. As the students did this, the teacher would circulate through the room and take note of the words students were struggling to match, as well as the words they were able to match easily. After considering which words were harder for students to match to their definitions, the teacher would then be able to prepare a lesson in which they address the words with which the students struggled. (Reigier, 12).

### ***Building Background Knowledge:***

After assessing the background knowledge that the students have, it is then the responsibility of the teacher to build the background knowledge that will be necessary for their lesson or unit. According to Daniel T. Willingham, a writer for the *New York Times*, several studies prove that “the systematic building of knowledge must be a priority in curriculum design” (Willingham).

While there is no one strategy to build background knowledge that is more effective than the others, some ways have a greater impact on students’ retention. According to Edgar Dale’s Cone of Experience, people generally retain 90% of what they do (Anderson). A more recent study performed by Beverly Davis and Michele Summers further emphasizes this idea. Davis and Summers conducted an experiment in which they studied students’ opinions on direct experience learning. They concluded that “these students confirmed that experiential activities significantly enhanced the learning outcomes...” (Davis and Summers, 7). Basically, students are more likely to retain things that they experience directly.



By definition, “direct experience refers to built-in opportunities for active engagement in the learning environment” (InTime). Creating a direct experience for students can be done in multiple ways; the exact process that one takes to build a direct experience for students does not matter as much as the direct experience itself. Perhaps one of the most obvious options to create a direct experience for students is a field trip. According to a Social Studies teacher in the Montgomery County Maryland Public School District, “field trips enable teachers to expand children’s learning beyond the walls of the classroom into the vast community outside. They provide children with experience that cannot be duplicated in the school, but are nonetheless an integral part of school instruction...” (Tomlinson). Robert Marzano further emphasizes this point in his book *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement* by stating that activities such as field trips “go a long way toward leveling the playing field in terms of the students’ academic background knowledge” (Marzano, 16). Though there are multiple ways to create direct experiences for students, it is clear that one of the most beneficial options to do this is through a field trip. Afterall, Confucius once said “ “I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.”

Another option for building background knowledge for students is through reading. Based on Dale’s Cone of Experience, one could argue that reading is the least effective means of creating background knowledge, as people only retain 10% of the information which they read. However, “reading is an excellent, indirect way to build background knowledge. Through books, readers meet people they otherwise would never have met, visit places and times that they would not have otherwise been able to visit, and interact with ideas that shape their understanding of the world” (Fisher, et al., 24). To teach students background knowledge through reading, students

should read multiple things on the same topic. A study performed by Susan J. Davis from the International Literacy Association proves this to be true.

Davis wanted a group of seventh-graders to write an article for a magazine, but she did not feel that the students had enough background knowledge to even come up with topics for their articles. To combat this, she came up with an eight- week study to help them acquire background knowledge. First, she gave the students a list of themes to choose from for their article. She then divided the students into groups based on the themes that they selected and asked them to make a list of everything they knew about the topic. Once they made the list, they were asked to share what they knew with the rest of their group. Davis then assigned the students the responsibility of finding material about the topic (articles from news magazines, excerpts from encyclopedias, a short section from a book or historical reference work, or newspaper articles). The students would share their findings with the rest of the group, and the group would discuss the material. For the next four weeks, they repeated the process. However, they were not allowed to bring in the same information that the other students in their groups brought in. “By the time the students had read from 12 to 20 articles about their topic... [she] decided it was time to begin to use what they knew to generate ideas for their papers (Davis & Winek, 179-181).

Though Davis’s process for building background knowledge through reading was a lengthy one, the process proved successful at the end. At the end of her research, Davis “asked the students if they felt they had been better prepared to write a research paper by the time spent building their background knowledge. The answer was an unequivocal YES.” (Davis & Winek, 181).

Another excellent way to build background knowledge in students is through connecting directly with the experts, or conducting interviews. Looking back to Dale's Cone of Experience, people generally remember 70% of what they write (Anderson). In conducting interviews, students are able to ask questions, and record the answers from their experts. It might seem like a challenging feat to find an expert to come into a classroom and talk to students, however, it does not have to be.

The website "Skype a Scientist creates a database of thousands of scientists and helps them connect with teachers, classrooms, groups, and the public all over the globe" (McAnulty). Obviously, this resource would best be utilized in a Science classroom. However, there are experts all around us. An expert on something is someone who "live[s] in the places, deal[s] with the problems, and [is] working towards the solutions" (Mack). Keeping that in mind, there is no difficulty in seeing how anyone around a community or in a child's life could be an expert on a given topic. Elliot Wiggington incorporated this practice with his high school students. In the 1970s, Wiggington's high school class published a series of magazines about the "life and ways of the local people in Rabun County, Georgia" (Knapp, 779). To gather the information necessary to create this publication, Wiggington's students interviewed people in that county. In doing this, Wiggington's students were able to hear directly from someone who experienced life during whatever time period they were inquiring about: an expert.

A different way to build background knowledge in students is through what is now commonly known as a "carousel walk." This activity is similar to a gallery walk, but it has one large difference. "In a Gallery Walk, students typically work on their own, moving around the room to complete a series of tasks. In a carousel, students work in small groups and move from

station to station, discussing each task as they go.” (Gray). According to Dale’s Cone of Experience, people generally remember 50% of what they see and hear (Anderson). Through a carousel walk, students are able to both speak about what they know, as well as listen to what others know.

The set up of a carousel walk is simple. To begin, the teacher obviously needs to determine what they want students to learn. Once this is determined, the teacher will then write terms or words on individual pieces of chart paper and tape the charts around the room. Students will then be grouped into groups of three or four, and the groups will each be given a different colored marker. Next, groups will be stationed at separate charts, and given an allotted amount of time to list on the paper what they know about the term. When time is called, students will transition to the next chart. They will continue this process until they have visited all of the charts. Once finished, the students will sit down (still in their groups) and the teacher will break down the charts with the whole class, asking for clarification from the students when needed. Teachers can “foster discussions and make connections as [they]... build background knowledge prior to reading” (Lent, 37).

Another wonderful option for building students’ background knowledge is the Language Experience Approach (LEA). “The language experience approach integrates speaking and listening, reading and writing through the development of a written text based on first hand experiences” (*The Language Experience Approach*). Clearly, this particular option combines all of the ways that were previously discussed to build background knowledge into one exercise.

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) has five steps. The process begins with “something the class does together, such as a field trip, an experiment, or some other activity,”

otherwise known as a direct experience (Professional Learning Board). After the shared experience, it is time to create the text. To do this, “students retell the events... and the teacher writes them on the board or chart paper” (*Language Experience Approach*). Once the events are written in an organized way, “the class reads the story aloud and discusses it” (*Language Experience Approach*). The teacher can then ask students if they would like to change anything or add to the story. The story is then reread by students, and copied into their notebooks. (Professional Learning Board). The final step is just an extension of what students can do with the story; it “can be used for a variety of literacy activities like illustrations or creating comprehension questions” (*Language Experience Approach*). By providing students with a direct experience and then incorporating all four of the language skills, the experience created is “more meaningful and accessible than texts found in prepared books,” thus making the likelihood of retention higher (*Language Experience Approach*).

Based on the above evidence, building background knowledge can either be incredibly elaborate, or something quick and efficient to level the playing field for all students. Teachers want their students to be as successful as possible, and ensuring that they know the necessary information about a topic before teaching anything about it is pertinent to that success. John Guthrie is adamant in *Contributions of Student Questioning and Prior Knowledge to Construction of Knowledge From Reading Information Text* that prior knowledge should be built “for the purpose of learning the content as fully as possible and linking new content to prior understanding” (Taboada & Guthrie, 11-12).

### ***How Does Background Knowledge Affect Students' Writing?***

Imagine trying to read and comprehend a language with which you are completely unfamiliar. Doing this would prove to be incredibly difficult. The same holds true when trying to write about a topic that one knows little or nothing about. Susan J. Davis and Janice Winek emphasize this point by saying “background knowledge is important in [writing]; students who know little about an assigned topic have difficulty writing about it” (Davis & Winek, 178). Thus, the fact that the amount of prior knowledge a student has on a topic greatly influences their ability to write about that topic is evident.

A study conducted by John Chesky and Elfrieda Hiebert further emphasizes this point. The study, entitled *The Effects of Prior Knowledge and Audience on High School Student's Writing*, was conducted to see just how great of an impact prior knowledge has on writing. First, the authors selected a class of eighty high school juniors to participate in the study. They then decided to choose two different overall topics that the students would write about, each with two separate subtopics with two of the four subtopics being things that students would have little to no prior knowledge on. The two themes they selected were tobacco and school instruction. The two subtopics that students were predicted to be able to write about were “the pros and cons of smoking” and “problems with teachers.” The two subtopics that students were not expected to have background knowledge about were “tobacco price supports” for the tobacco topic, and “teacher merit pay” for the school instruction topic. Students were randomly assigned one of the four options for writing, and asked to write an essay on their assigned topic that would be scored on three things: comprehension of the topic, length of the essay, and context creating statements. The results are not shocking (Chesky and Hiebert, 305-306).

In the holistic category of scoring, the students' scores reflected that the students who were given the topics that they would have more prior knowledge about performed better than those who were given the topics that they would not be expected to have background knowledge about. When looking at the length of the students' essays, the students with the topics that they knew more about were clearly able to write more about their topic. According to Chesky and Hiebert, the idea that "more coherent knowledge about a subject allows the writer to express more about a topic" was even more evident. (Chesky and Hiebert, 309). The scores for context creating statements reflected the same results as the previous two topics; students who knew more about their topic were able to write better introductions than the students who did not know much about the topic. Students were interviewed on their opinions of the task at the end, and while the students with the topic that they knew about all echoed the same overall enjoyment of the exercise, the students who were given the more difficult topic "did not like [it] because [they] were unfamiliar with the topic [they] were to write about. Therefore, it made it difficult to organize [their] thoughts. Ultimately, "students who wrote with a high level of prior knowledge wrote quantitatively more, created more of an overarching context for their readers, were more involved in their writing, liked their writing better, and found the task of writing easier than students who wrote with a low level of prior knowledge (Chesky & Hiebert, 310).

A similar study from the National Council of Teachers of English conveys very similar results. Judith A. Langer conducted a study titled *The Effects of Available Information on Responses to School Writing Tasks*. Langer observed that when assigning writing tasks, most teachers assign informational writing in an attempt to see how well the students learned the material that was taught. A result of this is that teachers pay little attention to how much

background knowledge their students have on the topic, nor how this lack of knowledge impacts their writing. To adequately observe this impact, Langer conducted an experiment (Langer, 27-28).

First, she chose a group of ninety-nine students to assign writing tasks to. Similar to Chesky, Langer selected two topics with two subtopics in each. The students were expected to know about one of the subtopics from each topic and be unfamiliar with the other. The students were assigned their topic and asked to write an essay about whichever topic they were given. Langer then scored each writing sample on overall quality and coherence. Langer found that the combined prior knowledge measure has the strongest impact on overall quality. Her findings also indicate that there is a significant relationship between the combined score for the background knowledge and the measure of coherence. Overall, “the data clearly suggest a strong consistent relationship between topic specific background knowledge and the quality of student writing” (Langer, 41).

An article by Linda-Jo Caple DeGroff, *The Influence of Prior Knowledge on Writing, Conferencing, and Revising*, describes a third study in which the researchers were interested to see how background knowledge impacted students’ writing. JF Voss, GT Vesonder, and GJ Spilich began their study by giving students a pre-assessment of knowledge on baseball. After gathering and observing the results of this pre-assessment, the researchers were able to group their participants into two groups- high background knowledge and low background knowledge. They then tasked both groups to write about a half inning of a baseball game. Voss, Vesonder, and Spilich found that the higher knowledge writers wrote more about the play-by-play action of the game, while the low knowledge students wrote about nongame relevant information.



According to Voss, Vesonder, and Spilich, “these results indicate qualitative differences in texts related to writers’ prior knowledge” (DeGroff, 107).

More often than not, writing teachers assign students writing assignments without considering the prior knowledge the students might have on the topic. Clearly, through the multiple studies recounted above, prior knowledge does have a major impact on students’ writing. Taking this into consideration, “it is logical to help students build background knowledge about topics before beginning the writing process” (Davis & Winek, 178).

**Conclusion:**

All too often, teachers begin teaching without any consideration of whether the students know anything about the topic they are teaching. Teachers then give students assignments on which they perform poorly. This poor performance is predominantly due to a lack of exposure to the topic that they are discussing. In a classroom setting, teachers need to begin assessing students' background knowledge and then teaching students the necessary background knowledge that they need to perform well on their tasks. The idea that students who know little about a topic are more likely to not be able to write well on the topic is a proven fact, so teachers should consider this before they begin teaching a unit on even something that should be familiar to their students. Afterall, we do not all have the same life experiences.

Before teaching a unit or lesson, "it is essential to find out what your students know about the topic." (Lent, 33). After assessing the prior knowledge that a student has, the teacher can better understand the prior knowledge that the students have not been exposed to, thus determining the knowledge that needs to be taught.

To combat the issue of being unexposed to the topic being discussed, there are countless ways that teachers can incorporate background building practices into their everyday teaching. Before a teacher begins teaching, knowing what the students do and do not know about the topic is critical. Once teachers assess background knowledge, they are then able to provide opportunities for students to learn what they need to know before the unit or lesson starts. There are countless ways to go about building background knowledge for students. Though Dale's Cone of Experience does offer the different retention percentages that are useful when planning

background building activities, the practice a teacher decides to use ends up being what works best for the students.

Ultimately, there are multiple studies to show that the amount of prior knowledge a student has greatly impacts their ability to write and write well. It is the responsibility of the teacher to assess what their students know about a topic, as well adjust their lessons accordingly to provide a space for the students to gain understanding about a topic before they write. By taking these extra steps in their teaching, teachers can enable students to perform to the best of their ability with nothing holding them back.

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